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DE RUEHDK #0286/01 0641716
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
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FM AMEMBASSY DAKAR
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2001
INFO RUEHZO/AFRICAN UNION COLLECTIVE IMMEDIATE
RUEHZK/ECOWAS COLLECTIVE IMMEDIATE
RUEHLI/AMEMBASSY LISBON IMMEDIATE 0871
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS IMMEDIATE 1198

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 DAKAR 000286

SIPDIS

STATE FOR AF/W, AF/RSA
PARIS FOR DEA

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/05/2019
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PU](#) [XY](#)
SUBJECT: BISSAU-GUINEAN INTERIM PRESIDENT PROFILE

Classified By: Classified by AMB Marcia Bernicat for reasons 1.5 (b) and (d)

11. (SBU) SUMMARY: Bissau-Guinean interim President Raimundo Pereira, born on August 28, 1956 in Bissau, is a lawyer by training and an experienced public servant by profession. Armed with a law degree from the University of Lisbon, Pereira launched an impressive career in the Bissau-Guinean government, eventually holding three successive ministerial positions and later the presidency of the National Assembly (ANP). Pereira, who speaks Portuguese and some French, has worked as a consultant for the World Bank and United Nations, and has participated in conferences and study tours organized by USAID. Married, Pereira is a stalwart of the African Party for the Independence of Guinea Bissau and Cape Verde (PAIGC) and is seen as a loyalist of Prime Minister Carlos Gomes Junior. END SUMMARY.

12. (SBU) Born on August 28, 1956 in Bissau, Guinea-Bissau during the colonial period, Raimundo Pereira moved to Lisbon, Portugal to study Law at the University of Lisbon, earning a degree in 1987. After a decade of government service, he returned to Lisbon for a year of post-graduate studies in Legal and Entrepreneurial Sciences, which consisted of International Trade, Labor, and Financial Law.

13. (SBU) Pereira held the following posts within the government of Guinea-Bissau (GOGB): Director of the National Radio (1988-1992); Director General of the National Television (1992-1993); Director General of Social Communications (1993-1994); Secretary of State for the Council of Ministers (1994-1996); Minister of Territorial Administration (1996-1997); Minister of Justice (2004-2005); Minister of Transportation and Communication (2005); President of the National Assembly (January-March 2009); and interim President (present). Pereira also worked as a law professor in Bissau and served as the president of the supervisory council of the Bissau-Guinean bar association.

14. (SBU) Pereira, who speaks Portuguese and some French, has worked as a consultant for the World Bank and United Nations. In 1997, according to his resume, he attended a USAID-sponsored conference entitled &Administrative Decentralization and Local Power.⁸ In 1994, he participated in a USAID conference designed to encourage revision of the commercial code. In 1993, he attended a USAID-sponsored study mission to Brazil and the United States to examine judicial reform.

15. (SBU) A close ally to Prime Minister Gomes, Pereira recently served as the First Vice-President of the PAIGC, helping to lead the party to a landslide victory in the November 2008 legislative elections. In return, Gomes lobbied hard to have Pereira, who had won a parliamentary seat in the November poll, elected president of the National

Assembly in the January ANP elections. Pereira eventually won out over Helder Proenca, the preferred candidate of former President Joao Bernardo Vieira.

¶6. (C) In a January 5, 2009 meeting with PolOff in Bissau, Pereira pledged to take a hard stance against narcotics traffickers, and promised to expel any deputy who was proven to be involved in the drug trade. Pereira dismissed as exaggerated gossip the reports of dissatisfaction with Gomes within the PAIGC, claiming the rumors originated from a very small number of vocal Gomes critics. Pereira expressed guarded optimism that PAIGC would be able to work with the Party for Social Renewal (PRS), noting that PRS President Kumba Yala met with party leaders at the PAIGC headquarters in December 2008.

¶7. (C) At the January 5 meeting, Pereira asked PolOff for USG assistance for the National Assembly. He said that legal and budgetary training was desperately needed for the deputies. In particular, Pereira asked for assistance in crafting effective laws to combat narcotics trafficking. Institutionally, he asked for assistance in establishing an internal computer network and management training for National Assembly permanent employees.

¶8. (C) COMMENT: Pereira is a smart, competent, well-respected public servant with a clean reputation. As a politician, however, he has no deep or wide base of support. His political rise is more attributable to his loyalty to Gomes than to his own political acumen. While his long-term political ambitions are unclear, he will likely be a competent and sound interim-president. END COMMENT.

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